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Reports: U.S. missile supply is badly depleted - News Herald, The (Panama City, FL) - August 8, 2026 - page A1
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The war on Iran has severely depleted key U.S. missile stockpiles and left the nation and its allies in a vulnerable position for potentially years to come, several experts and reports say.

U.S. missile stockpiles were low before President Donald Trump and ally Israel launched the war on Feb. 28. Now the nation's missile inventory is depleted to the point where analysts think it could soon be exhausted.

"This really has long-term strategic implications for the United States," said Kelly A. Grieco, a senior fellow at the Stimson Center, a think tank focused on global peace. "It's going to take years to get back up to the levels we had before we started this war, and that prewar level was already too low."

There has been a Center for Strategic and International Studies shortage analysis, a Washington Post report on Trump clashing with defense officials over stockpile issues and a Reuters report that the United States has nearly exhausted key munitions.

The president insisted in an Aug. 6 social media post that "the U.S. has massive amounts of 'munitions,' especially of certain types."

Later in the day, he told reporters that the United States has "a virtual unlimited supply" of missiles. He added the caveat that for certain missile types, supply is "tighter."

Pentagon officials slammed reported shortages as "false."

"America's military remains the most powerful fighting force on earth," Pentagon spokesperson Sean Parnell said in a statement. "We have everything required to strike at the time and place of the President's choosing. Across multiple combatant commands, we have already executed successful operations while maintaining a deep, ready arsenal to defend our people and our interests. Any adversary who confuses media noise with American weakness will discover the truth the hard way."

Yet experts estimated, based on military disclosures of attacks on the Islamic republic, that the war on Iran has depleted some of the U.S.' most important munitions.

Stockpile estimates are based on missile procurement numbers in federal budget documents compared against public disclosures regarding their use in the war, experts said.

According to the Center for Strategic and International Studies' analysis, the United States has used about half of its Patriot and THAAD defense missile inventories and one-third of its long-range ground attack Tomahawk missiles over the course of the war.

Mark F. Cancian, the lead author of the analysis, estimated the remaining inventory could be seriously exhausted if the war drags on for several more months.

"For a war against Iran, we could continue that for some time, for months," Cancian said. "But my suspicion is the Joint Chiefs of Staff sees us at a danger point for conflict with China, where we'd need all these missiles, and that's why we'd call this a window of vulnerability."

Cancian noted that the United States is well supplied in mid- and short-range munitions, though those weapons carry added risk.

"If there were a war before we rebuild these stockpiles, the U.S. will have greater losses and casualties," Cancian said. "For attack, we'll have to use something with a shorter range, which is much riskier, and then for defense we'll run out and not be able to stop incoming missiles."

U.S. stockpiles were low before the war, lawmakers have said.

"Our stockpiles of critical defense articles have fallen to dangerously low levels," House Armed Services Committee Chair Mike Rogers, R-Alabama, said in a March 4 statement just a few days into the conflict. "The consequences are clear. There are growing doubts about our ability to sustain a protracted fight against China."

U.S. missile shortages are already becoming a factor in Ukraine's war against Russia. Ukraine is one of several American allies that rely on U.S.-made systems for defense.

Trump on Aug. 6 blamed some of the stockpile depletion on Ukraine. The United States has given the country around 600 defense missiles since Russia invaded in 2022.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy warned on Aug. 1 that the country had run out of Patriot missiles. That day, Ukrainian air defenses were able to stop just one of 27 Russian attack missiles.

Other allies that could be impacted by the shortage include Japan and Taiwan, as well as the Persian Gulf nations currently fighting off Iranian attacks.

"If the fighting starts up again and the Iranians keep firing missiles at the Gulf states, then they'll be screaming for additional missiles," Cancian said.

Refilling missile stockpiles will take years due to manufacturing constraints, a handful of experts said. According to the strategic studies center analysis, the nation will not be back at prewar defense missile levels until the middle of 2029 and at prewar Tomahawk missile levels until 2030 or 2031.

There are many reasons for the shortage in munitions.

The missiles are difficult to manufacture, supply chain squeezes can interrupt production and the United States has not faced an adversary that could meaningfully strike back for decades, so the nation hasn't needed as many missiles. Production decisions are also made years in advance.

Another factor in defense systems, including Patriot missiles, is that typically two to three interceptor missiles are fired at every attack missile. Iran is estimated to have fired well over 1,000 attack missiles over the course of the war.

Years of the United States fighting in unofficial wars has also hurt supply.

These include, according to Center for Strategic and International Studies estimates, hundreds of defense missiles used by the Biden administration in fighting the Houthis in the Red Sea as well as dozens of attack missiles that were used to attack Iran in 2025, in the raid to capture Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and in the Christmas Day attacks on the Islamic State group in Nigeria.

Grieco said the shortages resulting from the Iran war could illustrate the limit of American resources.

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